

Message Text

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TAGS: ITALIAN PFOR, SOPN, OVIP (PRESIDENT LEONE) IT

SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION TO PRESIDENT LEONE'S VISIT

SUMMARY: MEDIA ANXIETIES ABOUT POSSIBLE US PRESSURES ON GOI DURING LEONE VISIT ALLEVIATED SOMEWHAT BY POSITIVE NATIVE MOST COVERAGE, HOWEVER, SEVERAL OBSERVERS NOTED THAT ITALY'S DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL VULNERABILITIES REMAIN DESPITE STATEMENTS THAT LEONE WAS ABLE TO COMMUNICATE BETTER IMAGE OF ITALY'S VIABILITY DURING VISIT. LEFT REMAINS WARY OF POSSIBLE USG PRESSURES BUT APPRENTLY RELIEVED BECAUSE IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORSE. END SUMMARY.

1. ITALIAN MEDIA EXPECTED SUBSTANTIVE TALKS TO FOCUS ON LOANS FOR ITALY, RELOCATION OF NATO BASES, AND STATUS OF PCI. ALTHOUGH NO DEFINITIVE DEVELOPMENTS THESE ISSUES ANTICIPATED, THERE WAS GENERAL EXPECTATION THAT US WOULD MAKE OFFERS OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN RETURN FOR GOI CONCESSIONS ON OTHER TWO ISSUES.

2. COVERAGE OF VISIT LED ALL RADIO-TV NEWSCASTS AND DOMINATED NEWSPAPER FRONT PAGES. MUCH EMPHASIS PLACED ON WARM WELCOME AFFORDED LEONE AND PARTY, AND TV NEWS DEVOTED EXTENSIVE SEGMENTS TO CEREMONIAL ASPECTS, E.G. LEONE'S HONORARY DEGREE, EXCHANGE OF TOASTS, ETC. FEELING UNCLASSIFIED

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CONVEYED THAT LEONE WAS RECEIVED WITH GENUINE AND WARM

EXPRESSIONS OF US FRIENDSHIP FOR ITALY.

3. CO-EXISTING WITH THIS WAS HEAVY UNDERLYING COMMENTARY THAT ANY AID TO ITALY WOULD CARRY FEARFUL POLITICAL STRINGS. MIDDLE POSITION TYPIFIED BY /IL GIORNALE'S/ GIANFRANCO PIAZZESI: "WE HAVE BEEN LUCKY THAT NATO GENERALS HAVE NOT CONSIDERED IT INDISPENSABLE TO TRANSFER SOME MILITARY BASES TO BRINDISI OR NAPLES. THANK GOD LEONE AND MORO CAN ASSURE FORD AND KISSINGER ABOUT ITALY'S FULL LOYALTY TO INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS... SINCE EVEN COMMUNISTS HAVE EXCLUDED POSSIBILITY OF OVERTHROWING ALLIANCE. HOWEVER, THEY ARE UNABLE TO OFFER LEAST GUARANTEE ABOUT POLITICAL STABILITY OF OUR COUNTRY." /CORRIERE DELLA SERA/ ADDED: "FOREIGN AID HAS A PRICE... FOREIGN INTERFERENCE WILL DEPEND ON EXTENT WE ARE CAPABLE... HOWEVER, WE SHALL BE GOVERNED BY THOSE WHO COME TO OUR AID, IF WE ARE NOT ABLE TO GOVERN BY OURSELVES."

4. CONSERVATIVE /IL TEMPO/ SAID "IDEA MUST BE DISMISSED THAT FORD AND KISSINGER WOULD ATTEMPT LEAST INTERFERENCE IN OUR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS." DC ORGAN /IL POPOLO/SAID THAT LEONE LEFT BEHIND HIM AN IMAGE OF AN ITALY WHICH HAS THE ABILITY TO EMERGE FROM A "CRISIS WHICH IS NOT SOLELY ITALIAN."

5. LEFT-OF-CENTER COMMENTATORS MOST FEARFUL THAT US MADE EXPLICIT DEMANDS. /IL GLOBO'S/ BARBARA SPINELLI STATED FLATLY THAT "WASHINGTON GAVE EXPLICITLY "NO" TO HISTORIC COMPROMISE." COMMUNIST OFFICIAL ORGAN /L'UNITA'/ AND COMPANION /PAESE SERA BOTH SAW US CONCERN OVER PCI GOVERNMENTAL PARTICIPATION AS DOMESTIC INTERFERENCE INSUFFICIENTLY RESISTED BY LEONE DELEGATION. /PAESE SERA/ CORRESPONDENT JOHN CAPELLI ADDED "BEYOND USUAL ASSURANCES... AMERICAN SHOWED HER USUAL FACE, AND THEREFORE "AMERICA'S CREDIBILITY IN ITALY IS STILL QUESTIONABLE." SOCIALIST /AVANTI/ INTERPRETED ALLEGED LACK OF DIRECT US PRESSURE AS AMERICAN CONCERN TO AVOID CRISES IN ALLIANCE COUNTRIES "WHEN MAIN OBJECTIVE IS FLIGHT AGAINST INFLATION."

6. AFTER LEONE'S RETURN, ALL MEDIA EMPHASIZE THAT RESPITE
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IN DOMESTIC INFIGHTING AFFORDED BY VISIT NOW OVER AND COUNTRY HEADED FOR SITUATION WHERE VIABILITY OF PRESENT GOVERNMENT WILL BE PUT TO ULTIMATE TEST IN UPCOMING WEEKS. BEAUDRY

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